

## THE PATRIARCH AT THE CENTRE OF AFRICA

On Sunday 16th October 2016, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, continuing his pastoral visit to Tanzania and specifically to the Holy Metropolis of Irinopolis, officiated during the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Arusha. Arusha is a multicultural city and capital of the district of the same name in the northern borders of Tanzania with Kenya, with a population of around one million. The city is considered as the indisputable capital of East Africa (East African Community) (Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and soon the Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia). The city hosts the central Courts of East Africa.

His Beatitude received a warm welcome by the local Metropolitan of Irinopolis His Eminence Dimitrios and the clergy of the Metropolis, the Honorary Consul of Cyprus in Arusha Mr George Mavroudis, and the Chairman of the Pan-Tanganikan Mr. Dimitrios Matthaiakis. In the crowded Holy Church of the Annunciation His Beatitude, visibly moved, spoke of the Greeks who first went to Arusha at the beginning of the previous century and of their achievements, such as the world-renowned Hellenic School "St Constantine" in 1951 and which is in operation to this day, its main benefactor and donor being Mr. Christos Galanos whose graduates today are all distinguished graduates, dispersed in all corners of the earth. With particular emotion he mentioned the family of Alexnader and Michael Rodousakis from Crete, who in 1953 built in memory of their parents John and Argyri the majestic church of the Annunciation in Arusha, as well as of the first missionary in the area, Archimandrite Nikodimos Sarikas, who died in 1941 and whose grave is in Tanga. Honouring the 14th anniversary of the ordination to the Episcopate of metropolitan Dimitrios of Irinopolis, His Beatitude wished him every good gift from God for his Hierarchal ministry and he donated a blessing Cross to the community.

Note that here in the city of Arusha, 100 Greek families first came at the beginning of the previous century, and worked mainly in the coffee rope (sisal) industries. It is characteristic that in the city square there is a tower that is deemed to be the "navel" of Africa, as the city is situated in the centre of Africa, as the distance between Arusha – Cairo is equal to the distance between Arusha-Cape Town.

Since the day of his enthronement His Beatitude has envisioned the city of Arusha as the Missionary Centre of East Africa, with a Theological Academy for the future priests, catechists and teachers, where the central printer which will issue books for worship and Orthodox catechism is also found.

The future of Orthodoxy here is bright through the mercy and Grace of God.

The next morning, His Beatitude together with His Eminence Dimitrios, Metropolitan of Irinopolis, visited the St Constantine Greek School, where 680 pupils study, in Primary, Secondary and High School, where he was warmly welcomed by the pupils and teachers. This school, which belongs to the Hellenic Pantanganikan Community, is the largest Greek School in Africa after Saheti in South Africa, at which the pupils come from various countries and which offers a high standard of education.